

# The Wishing Beast, by Paul Magrs

A Big Finish Productions Dr Who Audio Drama, released July 2007

## [Part One]

(The Tardis materialises, scanner activates.)

DOCTOR: And that's where this message is coming from. That asteroid. A lonely looking hunk of nothing much.

MEL: Oh. I thought you were taking us straight there, to the source of the message.

DOCTOR: Not yet, Mel. I thought best be on the safe side.

MEL: Mmm, you're worried, aren't you?

DOCTOR: Well, let's just say my reckless days are long over. I want to hear what this message actually says first.

MEL: It doesn't look very promising. I'm not keen on floating chunks of space waste. I mean, look at it. It's like an old skull or something.

DOCTOR: Mmm, well, appearances can be deceptive.

(Beeping.)

MEL: Ah ha. There we are. You were right to be wary.

DOCTOR: Don't tell me. Severe radiation warning?

MEL: Very severe. Looks lethal.

DOCTOR: Let me see those readings. Oh, decidedly nasty, I'd say.

MEL: We'd have been burned to a frazzle.

DOCTOR: Or worse.

MEL: What's worse than a frazzle? Hey, the readings are fluctuating. Can they do that?

DOCTOR: I don't know. It's very strange.

MEL: You know, I really don't like the look of that rock.

DOCTOR: And they do say discretion is the better part of valour.

MEL: You mean we could just go somewhere else and forget about it?

DOCTOR: Yes. It probably isn't anything vital.

MEL: Aren't you curious, though?

DOCTOR: I can't deny that. I can't deny that the moment we received the transmission... I don't know. I felt... something. Something inexplicable. But curiosity and cats don't always mix well, and I'm feeling distinctly feline today.

(Crackle on intercom.)

DOCTOR: Wait a minute. Something's coming through. Well, I never. And who do you think they are?

MARIA [OC]: We have waited such a long time to welcome you to our home. It will be a great honour for the two of us to receive you here at our humble abode. Please do not be put off by our apparently hostile environment, or the seemingly noxious atmosphere in which we exist. We have survived here and are sure you will be able to do so as well. Welcome, O thrice welcome, my friends. We are eager to make your acquaintance. Are we not, Eliza?

ELIZA [OC]: Who? What? Yes, yes, oh yes, we are, we are.

MARIA [OC]: My name is Maria Applewhite and this is my sister Eliza. Say hello, Eliza.

ELIZA [OC]: Hello, out there. Greetings (heavy static) Hello.

MARIA [OC]: Forgive my sister. She's so keen though, so anxious to meet with you, she's (heavy static) welcome you too, to give you your dearest wish, just as you deserve.

ELIZA [OC]: Oh yes, yes indeed.

MEL: Is that it?

DOCTOR: Oh. Well, they seemed like very pleasant old ladies.

MEL: Were they talking to us directly, or was it just some pre-recorded general message?

DOCTOR: It found us, didn't it? Let's try it again.

MEL: Doctor, look.

DOCTOR: Hmm? Something wrong?

MEL: Look, the readings. Everything's changed.

DOCTOR: Safe radiation levels? Breathable atmosphere?

MEL: But how can it suddenly have changed?

DOCTOR: Signs of civilisation! Vegetation, small settlement nearby, a large house in the woods.

MEL: That's where they live?

DOCTOR: Seems to be.

MEL: So we've changed our minds? We're going to land.

DOCTOR: They seem friendly enough. They invited us to pay a visit. And I am rather intrigued by an environment that can completely change itself seemingly at will.

(The Tardis dematerialises.)

MARIA: My dear, my dear, you must wake. See what today has brought us

ELIZA: What? What? What?

MARIA: There is an arrival, my dear. A new arrival. Perhaps the one we have waited for.

ELIZA: Who? Who did you say was here?

MARIA: *They* have come. I just know they have. We have guests, Eliza.

ELIZA: A long time since the last ones.

MARIA: I know.

ELIZA: Quickly, help me. Unburnish my eyes, find my glasses. Help me, hmm? Help me up to face the day.

(A tawny owl hoots. The Tardis door opens.)

MEL: Oh, it's cold, isn't it?

(Tardis door closes.)

DOCTOR: It's a pity your leg warmers don't reach all the way up to your neck, isn't it? Seriously, though, do you want to nip back into the Tardis and get that winter coat of yours?

MEL: No, it's all right. Look, there's the house. Not too far away, is it?

DOCTOR: Well, if you're sure.

MEL: It's incredible. It really does look like something from Earth.

DOCTOR: Rather Gaudi-esque, all those blobby organic bits and the funny windows. Mel?

MEL: I still don't get it. None of this was here, was it?

DOCTOR: Perhaps none of this appeared to be here because someone didn't want us to see it yet. Perhaps they wanted to check us out first.

MEL: Those old ladies?

DOCTOR: Could be.

MEL: Yes, well, can we go and announce ourselves, Doctor? I'm not sure I like it out here. I feel like there's something watching us.

DOCTOR: Actually, so do I.

(A twig breaks.)

MEL: I didn't imagine that, did I?

DOCTOR: Er, no. And it sounds like it's between us and the Tardis. It's probably nothing.

MEL: Probably nothing. Are you sure?

DOCTOR: Er, well, no. So just in case, let's head straight for the house at er, well, a brisk pace.

MEL: Okay. I mean, it isn't far, is it? We could er... we could go a bit faster, if you liked.

DOCTOR: Mmm, yeah.

MEL: Doctor?

DOCTOR: Good idea. And hold my hand, would you?

MEL: Are you that scared?

(Weird noise.)

DOCTOR: Perhaps we should, you know, run! Run, Mel. Don't look back.

GHOST: Come. Come back. Come back. We don't want to hurt you. Stay here in the woods. Stay here with us. The Applewhite house won't save you. There's no protection there for you.

(Knocking on door.)

DOCTOR: Hello? Are you in?

MEL: We got your message.

DOCTOR: Hello!

MEL: Maybe it was just a recording, and those poor old dears are long dead.

(Door being unlocked.)

MEL: Ah, or maybe they're still alive.

(Door opens.)

MARIA: My dears, you are here.

DOCTOR: We picked up your message. It took some decoding, but I made sense of it in the end.

MEL: Hello, I'm Melanie, and this is the Doctor.

DOCTOR: I take it that it was us you were wanting to see?

MARIA: Ah, Melanie, Doctor. What a sight for sore eyes, eh, Eliza?

ELIZA: Sore eyes. Sore eyes. So bright. I have sore eyes.

MARIA: I didn't mean your eyes, my dear. I meant our guests. How pleased we are to see them, are we not?

ELIZA: Oh, we are, we are.

MARIA: Come in.

(Door closes.)

MEL: Oh, that's much better. Much warmer in here.

MARIA: Let me take your coats. You have come far?

DOCTOR: Well, impossibly far, you could say.

ELIZA: How marvellous.

MEL: What do you reckon? Harmless?

DOCTOR: Mostly, it would seem.

MARIA: I can't tell you how delighted and amazed we are that you would listen to our message, and respond like you have.

ELIZA [OC]: Bring them in here, by the fire.

DOCTOR: Er, how long is it exactly since you sent your message out? I don't mean to be, well, indelicate, but you do appear to be a little – how can I put it?

MEL: Older?

DOCTOR: Oh shush, Mel.

MARIA: Oh, don't worry, Doctor. Melanie is right. Yes, it has been many years since we recorded our message, and it has been a long time since anyone last came here.

ELIZA: Such a long time. A long, long, long time.

MEL: And you need our help.

ELIZA: Of course, of course. Help! Help!

MARIA: Don't mind my sister. She's agitated. She will calm down soon. Will you take tea, or sherry?

DOCTOR: Whichever you prefer, ladies.

MARIA: Then it shall be sherry. Sherry for the great hero from beyond Space and Time.

DOCTOR: Oh, well, you know, modesty forbids and all that.

MARIA: Eliza dear, you will have the honour of serving our guests, if you don't mind.

ELIZA: My pleasure. My pleasure.

MEL: Please, don't go to any trouble.

DOCTOR: Yes, we were more than happy to respond to your call.

MARIA: Quite. We have cakes also.

DOCTOR: Your sister. Can she manage all right, serving us?

ELIZA: Whatever does he mean, manage? Milk for both of you?

MEL: In the sherry?

DOCTOR: Forgive me, madam, but the dark glasses, I thought perhaps that your sister was...

MARIA: We have lived here a long time, Doctor. She knows her way around. But yes, her sight was lost many years ago, when we first arrived.

ELIZA: The burning, the brightness! Aieeee! My eyeballs simply melted in their sockets. One lump or two?

MEL: Er, no sugar for me.

ELIZA: Sweet or dry sherry, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Oh, I see. Dry, please. I'm sorry to hear about your accident.

(Crash.)

ELIZA: Bother.

MARIA: Our arrival on this world was rather violent, unexpected.

ELIZA: Cursed. It was cursed, and so are we. Here we are. Refreshments.

DOCTOR: Oh, marvellous. Now, I'm afraid we couldn't quite make out some parts of your message, so I was wondering if you could tell us

MARIA: The Wishing Beast.

DOCTOR: Wishing?

MEL: Beast?

MARIA: That is what we have brought you here to see.

DOCTOR: Ah. I see. Or rather, I'm afraid I don't.

MARIA: The Wishing Beast doesn't mean any harm, and he has called out to the hero of Space and Time in order to bestow a reward.

DOCTOR: A reward? What kind of reward?

MARIA: The hero's dearest wish, of course.

DOCTOR: Really. Well, that's very kind of you.

MEL: Sounds a bit like something out of a fairy tale.

DOCTOR: Yes, well, it's very kind of you to offer me my dearest wish, ladies, but I'm not sure

MARIA: You, Doctor? You assume the reward is for you?

DOCTOR: Oh, er, well, I suppose I did, rather, yes.

MARIA: But we intended that the Wishing Beast should give the just reward to the brave explorer and great hero of Time and Space.

DOCTOR: Er, well, yes?

MARIA: Why Melanie, it is you who the Wishing Beast wants to see.

(Mel spits out her drink and starts coughing.)

MARIA: You are the reason we sent out our message.

MEL: Me?

DOCTOR: Well, lucky old you, Mel.

(Kettle boiling.)

MARIA: Such a lovely girl, isn't she, Eliza? So natural. So modest, too. Did you hear the surprise in her voice when we told her?

ELIZA: Modest. Modesty becomes her. Not the Doctor.

MARIA: Oh no. The poor Doctor was bamboozled, wasn't he? I shouldn't laugh, but his expression was a picture, wasn't it?

ELIZA: A picture. Picture. A picture of what, though?

MARIA: What indeed. But I must get back to them. I'll leave you to make that fresh pot of tea, my dear. Now, are these cakes ready to go?

ELIZA: Take them. Take them cakes.

DOCTOR: Well, this is all very strange, isn't it?

MEL: Oh, come on, don't pretend you're not a bit put out.

DOCTOR: Put out? What, that I'm not the great hero of Space and Time?

MEL: But you are though, aren't you.

DOCTOR: What, the great hero of Space and Time, or put out?

MEL: Both.

DOCTOR: So, given any thought what your dearest wish might be, Princess Mel?

MEL: I think they're both a bit doolally, don't you? I mean, perhaps I should graciously decline and offer you up in my place.

DOCTOR: Well, let's just play along for the time being. I want to find out what's

MEL: Shh. They're coming back.

(Door opens.)

MARIA: My sister will be here with more tea presently. Would you like some more sherry, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Well, that's very kind of you, Maria, but I won't, thank you.

(Moaning sound, Eliza whimpering, glass breaks. Door opens.)

MARIA: Eliza, what have you done?

ELIZA: Stupid, stupid Eliza. I dropped them, Maria. I dropped the lot! Look, spilled and smashed. No good, no good now.

MARIA: It's all right. It doesn't matter.

MEL: Here, let me help.

DOCTOR: What made you drop them? We heard something.

ELIZA: It was the noise, Maria. Those... those things are getting in.

DOCTOR: Things?

ELIZA: Getting in from outside. They're coming in from the woods. They are coming into our house now. We must be on our guard.

MEL: What things, Eliza?

ELIZA: Ghostly ghosts.

MARIA: She hears things. The noises play havoc with her imagination.

DOCTOR: Ghosts? Are you sure, Eliza?

ELIZA: Oh yes. I heard them. Nasty things. Fading away things. Even with my poor eyes I can glimpse them, shimmering, silvery, at the corner of my vision, the little I have left to me.

MARIA: Calm down, my dear. Calm down. Come and sit down.

MEL: There's no such thing as ghosts, Eliza. You're safe.

MARIA: But there is. Here on this world there is... something. This last remaining shard of a world, this awful splinter.

MEL: Really?

DOCTOR: Awful splinter?

(Door opens, Doctor straining.)

MARIA: Here, help me settle her on the sofa.

DOCTOR: One, two, three, hup. Ah. There, better now?

ELIZA: Much.

MEL: Tell us more, Maria, about the ghosts.

MARIA: The woods, out there, they are alive with ghosts, with macabre presences. We are safe here indoors, except lately my sister has been sensing them in here.

ELIZA: They are getting inside. They are all around us.

MARIA: Oh, it is of no interest to you. We mustn't be side-tracked into talking about our fears and our woes.

MEL: Oh, we don't mind, do we, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Of course not.

MEL: We'd like to help if we can.

MARIA: Another sherry, Doctor. Let us listen to Melanie. Melanie, will you tell us about your adventures in Time and Space?

MEL: Oh, really, it's not just me

DOCTOR: Actually, I won't have another drink, thank you. I think I'll pop back to the Tardis. I want to, well, check she's safely locked up. I don't want ghosts creeping around inside it.

ELIZA: Oh, ghosts inside.

MARIA: There, there, there. There, there, there.

MEL: (sotto) Do you really think they might get inside?

DOCTOR: Probably not, but I want to see if the Tardis has picked up any psionic energy emissions.

MEL: Psionic? But what about me?

DOCTOR: Oh, I think these two are harmless enough. (normal) So, you carry on, Mel. You stay here. Tell them about your travels.

MEL: All right, Doctor.

ELIZA: Stay, Doctor. Stay here by the fire.

DOCTOR: No, really, I need to stretch my legs.

MARIA: Oh, of course. You are our honoured guest. The companion of Melanie. You must come and go as you please.

DOCTOR: You're very kind.

(A clock chimes.)

MARIA: Dinner will be at six, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Splendid. Just enough time. Ladies.

ELIZA: More, Melanie. Tell us more.

MARIA: Yes, tell us all about your fabulous adventures.

DOCTOR: Let's see what kind of energy emissions we're getting. Ah. Most interesting. You're out there, aren't you. I can sense you. The Tardis can feel your presence. Make yourself known to me.

(Tapping.)

DOCTOR: So you are there. Almost intangible, almost invisible, but you *are* there. You're trying to get through, you're trying to communicate. Is it me you want? Are you trying to talk to me, hmm?

(Banging on door.)

DOCTOR: Tell me, I'll listen. Talk to me. (silence) Oh, come back. What's happened to you? Come back and talk to me! Ah, gone. Energy emissions have gone too. But it was definitely there.

DOCTOR: Ah. Really, I must say compliments to the chef, Maria. The food is excellent.

MEL: It really is.

MARIA: Daniel would have been so pleased to meet them, wouldn't he, Eliza?

ELIZA: Oh yes. Yes, oh yes.

MARIA: He so wanted to be a traveller himself, you see. Why, he would have been flabbergasted by your tales of travelling the cosmos. The way you make it sound, it seems so easy. Skipping from world to world, time after time.

ELIZA: So easy. Too easy.

MEL: Well, it's not as easy as all that. But tell me, who is Daniel?

ELIZA: Daniel is... Daniel is no more. Daniel was. He was once.

MARIA: Shush. Eliza, don't upset yourself. Daniel was our brother, Melanie. He died many years ago. When we first came to this terrible land it was just the three of us. Like three shipwrecked sailors we were, washed up on the jagged reefs of this asteroid. We were only children. Just little children.

ELIZA: Daniel was our brother. He was younger than us, but he was our champion, our protector. He was, he was.

MEL: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry

DOCTOR: Well, we all have our sad tales, don't we.

MEL: Do you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Oh, enough of this gloomy talk. What about this Wishing Beast, hmm? I'm fascinated by that.

ELIZA: Tomorrow. Tomorrow is the day for wishes.

MARIA: My sister is correct. Tomorrow all will become clear. You will receive your reward, Melanie.

MEL: Really, you know, I don't actually need a reward. Honestly.

DOCTOR: Oh, don't be so modest, Mel. Just look at the things you've faced up to since you've been in my company. Awful things.

MARIA: Eliza, do come and help me with dessert. Do forgive us, Melanie. We must go and tend to the dessert.

DOCTOR: Just desserts, eh?

MARIA: I'm sorry?

DOCTOR: Just a joke.

MARIA: Ah yes. You are very whimsical, Doctor. What a boon you must be to Melanie on her adventures. Come, sister.

(Door opens and closes.)

DOCTOR: Oh. Well, am I a boon?

MEL: (laughing) Oh definitely, Doctor. Wait till you see the rooms they've given us. Mine is just spectacular. Real luxury.

DOCTOR: I'm not sure I want to stay the night here. Not after what happened when I went back to the Tardis.

MEL: Oh yes. Quick, tell me before they come back.

DOCTOR: I was haunted.

MEL: What? Doctor, are you sure?

DOCTOR: I was in the console room, and there was this tapping on the outer shell of the Tardis. And when I talked to it, it became louder, more frenetic.

MEL: Someone outside?

DOCTOR: The instruments gave only a partial reading, but there was something. Someone was there, someone not quite solid, someone not quite...

MEL: Not quite what?

DOCTOR: Not quite living.

MEL: Did you see them?

DOCTOR: They evaporated. Simply melted away.

MEL: Do you think whoever it was was following us in the woods?

DOCTOR: Perhaps. But there's worse than that. The Tardis herself is somehow affected. Jammed.

MEL: Jammed?

DOCTOR: We couldn't take off now if we wanted to. Something has got into her.

(Door opens.)

MARIA: Here we are.

(Door closes.)

ELIZA: We are, we are. Here's just desserts.

MEL: That's magnificent!

DOCTOR: That must be the biggest trifle in the universe.

MARIA: You flatter us, Doctor.

DOCTOR: And you are spoiling us, my dear Maria.

MARIA: Will you let me propose a toast?

DOCTOR: Oh, yes.

MARIA: Blessings on our esteemed guests, and especially to Melanie, whose travels we have been hearing so much about.

ALL: To Melanie.

MARIA: Tomorrow you will receive your great reward, Melanie.

(Distant door slams.)

MEL: What was that?

DOCTOR: A door, I think.

ELIZA: Reward, reward. Tomorrow will be the day.

MARIA: Tomorrow we rise early and we ride out deep into the woods, in our carriage.

(A nearer door slams.)

DOCTOR: There, again.

MEL: But can't they hear it?

MARIA: Hear what, my dear?

DOCTOR: Doors slamming, crashes. Mel, you can hear it too, can't you? Don't tell me it's just me.

MEL: I can. It's

MARIA: Now, tomorrow we shall go searching for the Wishing Beast himself.

MEL: Excuse me, Maria, but those noises.

ELIZA: Noises, noises. It's the noisy noises, Maria.

(Big bang, eerie sounds.)

DOCTOR: More of your ghosts, Maria?

MARIA: Please ignore them. There's nothing to see.

(Whoosh, breaking glass, moaning.)

GHOST: We asked you to listen. We asked you to hear us. We didn't want to cause a scene or make a fuss. Now you will listen to us.

MEL: I don't believe it. Ghosts!

ELIZA: Noisy ghosts. I don't like them. Make them go away.

MARIA: Leave us! Be gone! Ignore them, everyone. Pay them no heed.

MEL: Oh my God, Doctor.

DOCTOR: It's all right, Mel. Don't panic.

MEL: But that was right beside me.  
DOCTOR: Go on, Maria. Carry on with what you were saying.  
MARIA: Thank you, Doctor. We will all ride in our carriage to the very depths of the woods, and there we will face the Wishing Beast together, and Melanie will tell him her dearest wish.  
ELIZA: She will. She will ask for her dearest wish.  
MEL: I'm not even sure what that is.  
DOCTOR: And then, Maria?  
MARIA: And then, naturally, he will grant it.  
DOCTOR: How? Why?  
MARIA: You will see, Doctor.  
DOCTOR: Sounds suspiciously like magic to me. And magic, like ghosts, may appear to be inexplicable, but they are only unexplained. And at the moment all this looks like a pretty poor display of cheap theatrics.  
MEL: I think you spoke too soon, Doctor. Look at that thing. It's horrible.  
DOCTOR: How are you doing this, Maria? Is it you doing this?  
ELIZA: Take it away. Take it.  
MARIA: It has nothing to do with us, Doctor. These things come and go at will.  
GHOST: Please, now we have your attention. Please, you must, you have to listen to us. Hard to cut through... psychic interference. The sisters won't let us talk with you. We want to help  
DOCTOR: What's it saying?  
MARIA: Be gone. Leave us!  
ELIZA: Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!  
DOCTOR: Quiet! Let us hear.  
GHOST: Doctor, Mel, listen to me. Flee from here. The sisters, they will be the death of all of us!

## [Part Two]

DOCTOR: How very interesting.  
MARIA: I'm not having this.  
ELIZA: Can I fetch it, Maria? Can I fetch it out of the cosy cupboard? Cosy cupboard under the stairs.  
MARIA: You do that, Eliza dear.  
MEL: What's she doing now?  
DOCTOR: Never mind her, Mel. Phantasm, spirit, spectre, banshee, whatever you are, what is it you want?  
GHOST: Please, they are going to get rid of me. You must listen before they send me away.  
MEL: We are listening. Tell us.  
MARIA: Bah, foul spirit, leave this place. Be gone.  
DOCTOR: No, let him speak.  
MARIA: Have you done it, Eliza? Do you have it ready?  
MEL: Tell us. Why should we flee the sisters? What's happening here?  
GHOST: They will destroy me. I must go.  
MARIA: Eliza, quickly! Bring that thing here at once!  
ELIZA: I have done it, Maria. Here it is.  
MARIA: Good. Now give it to me.  
MEL: A vacuum cleaner?  
ELIZA: Scourge of all ghostly nasties.  
(Vacuum cleaner starts up.)  
MARIA: Be gone! Avaunt! Have away with ye, demon.  
DOCTOR: What the...?  
GHOST: Please. No. There's hardly anything of me left in this world. Please. Ah!  
(Long, drawn-out, fading cry. Vacuum turned off.)  
MEL: Unbelievable.  
DOCTOR: Unforgivable! That's no ordinary vacuum, is it, ladies.  
ELIZA: It's mine. Hands off!  
DOCTOR: As I thought. There's a proton filter here.  
MEL: Which means?  
DOCTOR: Which means  
MARIA: It sucks up spooky nasties.  
DOCTOR: It destabilises particles at the molecular level.  
MEL: Which means?  
DOCTOR: That ghost had a physical presence. A slight one, I'll grant you, but  
ELIZA: Which means turn it up to max and it can suck the life out of even you!  
(Vacuum on.)  
DOCTOR: Careful!  
MARIA: Eliza dear, let's not get excited. (vacuum off) Why don't you pop the vacuum cleaner back under the

stairs?

ELIZA: Of course. Of course.

(Door opens and closes.)

MEL: You sucked the ghost up? Where is he?

MARIA: Where all the old rubbish goes, I'm afraid. Oh dear, that's the trifle on the floor.

DOCTOR: You should have let him be.

MARIA: He was very dangerous, Doctor.

DOCTOR: To whom?

MEL: He was warning us against going to the Wishing Beast.

MARIA: Of course he was. Envy. Who wouldn't be envious, Mel? Who wouldn't be jealous of what you've got coming to you tomorrow?

MEL: How's your room?

DOCTOR: Smaller on the inside. I think the cupboard under the stairs is bigger. How's your luxury?

MEL: Somehow I didn't notice. How are we going to get out of here?

DOCTOR: We have to find out what's going on, then perhaps we can undo whatever it is that's jamming the Tardis. But one thing's for sure. I don't trust those sisters one inch.

MEL: Me neither. But I think you should take another look at the Tardis and see if you can fix it.

DOCTOR: What, leave you here? I can't do that.

MEL: At least they're falling over themselves to be nice to me. I'll be all right. And they'll be happy as long as I'm here to be taken to their precious Wishing Beast in the morning.

DOCTOR: I can't let you face whatever that is on your own.

MEL: I won't argue with that. Just make sure you're back here by morning.

DOCTOR: You're not scared?

MEL: Scared? Course I'm scared. But we've got to get to the bottom of this, haven't we, or we're stuck here.

DOCTOR: Hmm. And I have to admit that I'm not altogether comfortable with taking another walk in that haunted forest. So, let's both be brave, shall we?

MEL: Well, we can at least try.

DOCTOR: All right. And you should try to get some sleep. I've a feeling we'll need our wits about us in the morning.

MEL: No point asking if you'll get any sleep, I suppose.

DOCTOR: Mmm. Think cat, not tortoise. And cats have all their best adventures at night.

(The owl hoots, the Doctor is humming. Whoosh!)

DOCTOR: Hello? Who is that? It's you again, isn't it? Look, I know you're following me. You might as well step out into the moonlight where I can see you. I am not budging from this spot till you show yourself. I don't scare easily, you know.

MILDEW: Doctor.

DOCTOR: Decided to show yourself, have you?

MILDEW: Doctor, we don't have much time. The Applewhite sisters are abed. They are no danger to us for now until morning. I have this night to tell you what is going on here.

DOCTOR: I'm glad someone is going to. Who are you? And keep still, will you? I can hardly focus on you.

MILDEW: I'm sorry about that. I'll try to fix my form a little more. But I am mostly insubstantial, Doctor. I am hardly here. My essence has been ripped away from me, and I am to all intents and purposes a phantom.

DOCTOR: A phantom, indeed. And do you have a name?

MILDEW: Mildew.

DOCTOR: How charming. And how'd you know who I am? I find it rather disconcerting, phantoms knowing all about me.

MILDEW: I have been watching you since you arrived here. I have been at your elbow, watching, hoping.

DOCTOR: Hoping for what?

MILDEW: I think you can help us, all of us living here. Those of us who have suffered at the gnarled and wicked hands of those sisters.

DOCTOR: Why should I believe you? The sisters seem to think you're the wicked one.

MILDEW: Come with me. Please.

DOCTOR: Where to? Further and deeper into this ghastly forest, I suppose. And what will I find there?

MILDEW: My people. More like me. Please, come.

DOCTOR: Very well. Show me, then, Mildew. I'll just have to trust you, won't I?

ELIZA: Maria. Maria, wake up. Oh please, my dearest sister. Sister, you must wake up.

MARIA: Oh, Eliza, what is it? I'm old, I need my rest. Tomorrow will be arduous. You know what we need to do.

ELIZA: But I can't sleep. I can't get myself asleep, Maria.

MARIA: Go back to bed.



ELIZA: May I come in with you?  
MARIA: Dear, you're a child still, aren't you.  
ELIZA: That Doctor. I like him.  
MARIA: Mmm, I thought you might.  
ELIZA: He's gone, you know. Went out. Ever so careful, so no one would hear.  
MARIA: Did he really? Well, won't get far. Mel didn't go with him, did she? You'd have told me if Mel had gone, wouldn't you, dear?  
ELIZA: Oh, of course, of course, Maria.  
MARIA: He returned to his miraculous Tardis, of course, but he can't take it anywhere.  
ELIZA: Tomorrow we will see our Beast. We will see him again.  
MARIA: We will, my dear.  
ELIZA: I love seeing him. I love him.  
MARIA: So you should. And so you should.  
ELIZA: The Wishing Beast.  
MARIA: Shh. You mustn't call him that really. Others do. To them he is a beast, but not to us. Not to us.

DOCTOR: So, this is where you live?  
MILDEW: This is our home, Doctor. Our village, hidden away deep inside the wintry woods.  
DOCTOR: How many of you are there?  
MILDEW: Fewer than a hundred. The numbers fluctuate, depending.  
DOCTOR: Are all of you like this? Reduced to living wild in ruins like this?  
MILDEW: We can't taste or touch or feel much at all. Some of us can concentrate ourselves and become manifest and corporeal for small spans of time. The cold doesn't affect us. We can't ingest anything nor have any need to. We can't even lie down without sinking into the earth.  
DOCTOR: I've often wondered about that. How would ghosts even walk on the ground? Why wouldn't they just drop through?  
MILDEW: But we do.  
DOCTOR: That much is clear to me, Mildew, but little else at the moment.  
MILDEW: It takes an immense and continuous effort of will to hover above the ground and manifest ourselves so that the likes of you, the corporeal ones, can see us.  
DOCTOR: It's quite staggering. I feel as if I'm dreaming and sleep-walking. I am honoured to be brought here.  
MILDEW: My people are fascinated by you, Doctor. They see so very little colour in their lives. Colour is one of the many sensations they've had taken away from them.  
DOCTOR: Well, I'm happy to oblige. I think.  
MILDEW: Sit here, Doctor. Let them pass by you. Let them see you.  
DOCTOR: Here? Er, hello, everyone.  
GHOST 2: My brother, you must have seen him.  
DOCTOR: I'm sorry?  
GHOST 2: My brother got into the bad house. He was brave. The bravest of all of us. He tried to warn you and your friend to beware the sisters. He does not respond now when I shout. Where is he now, my brother?  
DOCTOR: I'm afraid... I'm sorry, but they got rid of him. I think... I think they destroyed him.  
GHOST 2: Noooooo!  
(Spectral wailing.)  
MILDEW: They mourn the loss of one of us.  
DOCTOR: I'm so sorry about the loss of his brother. There was nothing I could do.  
MILDEW: We understand, Doctor.  
DOCTOR: So, how do you all come to be here?  
MILDEW: We were lured by those sisters.  
DOCTOR: Really. Like the victims of the sirens.  
MILDEW: With the promise of... oh, it sounds so foolish now. The promise of our  
DOCTOR: Dearest wish?  
MILDEW: To be granted by the fabled Wishing Beast.  
DOCTOR: I see.  
MILDEW: They flattered everyone of us. We were the brave travellers, the heroic explorers.  
DOCTOR: And when you got here?  
MILDEW: We were all received with open arms by the sisters, with a rapturous welcome at their mansion. We were fed and cared for. We were told we were heroes. Then we were taken to see the Wishing Beast.  
DOCTOR: And?  
MILDEW: And then it made us what you see now. It eats us, Doctor. That is why we are brought here. It is why you and your friend are here. Fodder for the creature that says it grants wishes. What will you do, Doctor?  
DOCTOR: I'm going to help you. We're going to do something about this.

MILDEW: It is almost morning, Doctor. The sisters will be riding out soon to find the Wishing Beast.

DOCTOR: Mel! They're taking Mel.

MILDEW: Wait, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I must return to their house.

MILDEW: They will come here first, to our village.

DOCTOR: Here? Why?

MARIA: Good morning, Melanie dear. Come, you must eat something before our journey begins.

MEL: Oh, I'll have a glass of fruit juice. Nothing else, thanks. I feel a bit nervous, to be honest.

ELIZA: Nervous. Nervous. I am always nervous when we go and see him. He is so changed.

MARIA: Shush, Eliza. We don't want to worry Melanie. Just think. The stables, Eliza. You love the horses. And the carriage. You love our little jaunts out from the stables.

MEL: Who is so changed?

ELIZA: For the better, we think. He is a better creature. A magical thing.

MEL: But

ELIZA: Our brother.

MEL: You told me he was dead.

MARIA: It seems easier to tell our story that way sometimes, even though it isn't actually true. But people don't always believe the truth when you tell them, do they?

ELIZA: Daniel changed, when we came here. He became something else. His body, everything. He got powers.

MARIA: As I told you, Melanie, we were only children. We were washed up here on this shattered asteroid in the wreckage of a space cruiser many years ago. Our parents, everyone we knew, had been killed in the attack. And we were all that was left.

ELIZA: And Daniel was hurt. Badly hurt.

MARIA: And the space radiation or whatever it was acted on his tissues and his injuries. I don't understand science, but our Daniel changed.

MEL: Oh, my God. You mean he mutated?

MARIA: Oh, is that the word? I don't know.

ELIZA: I changed too. Tell her, Maria. My dark glasses. Behind these lenses I am a changed being too.

MARIA: Yes, Eliza, you changed too, and that is why you are... different. But Daniel changed by far the most. He grew a dragon-like skin, a pelt of fine-spun scaly gold. He grew extra limbs. His eyes grew reptilian and shrewd. He moved away from us. He couldn't live with his sisters any more. He withdrew into the forest to nurse his horrendous wounds and alterations, and to try out his new-found powers.

MEL: Oh, my God.

MARIA: I thought it best you knew before we rode out this morning.

ELIZA: He is our brother. Our little one.

DOCTOR: Tell me about the sisters, Mildew.

MILDEW: They take us away.

FEMALE GHOST: They come for us often.

MILDEW: Tell the Doctor about what they do to us.

FEMALE GHOST: They come here for tribute. They feed a handful of us ghosts to the Wishing Beast as appetisers before the main sacrifice. It happens each time they go to meet it.

DOCTOR: Oh, that's horrible! But you've already been absorbed once. He turned you into phantoms, you said. Well, how can he consume you again?

FEMALE GHOST: There are layers and layers to a living essence, Doctor. The Wishing Beast is clever. He rarely eats a soul all in one go. He strips us away skin by skin.

DOCTOR: Ah. The Wishing Beast was originally Daniel Applewhite, wasn't he? That's why the sisters are so preoccupied with him

FEMALE GHOST: You are right, so right. You guessed right.

MILDEW: They tend to him, feed him. He's still their little brother, whatever he has become.

MEL: Er, have either of you seen the Doctor this morning?

MARIA: Come along, Mel. It's time we were going deep into the woods.

MEL: But

ELIZA: He's left you, Melanie. The Doctor has left you to your dearest wish.

MARIA: I have stowed our weapon safely aboard, Eliza.

ELIZA: And the rugs for our knees. The air is so sharp this morning.

MARIA: Everything is here. Climb aboard.

MEL: Why do we need weapons, Maria?

MARIA: The woods are thick with evil spirits. You observed that yourself. We are three women travelling into a very dangerous region.

MEL: Er, I really think we should wait for the Doctor.  
ELIZA: No. He has abandoned you. He's run away. He's gone.  
MEL: No, he wouldn't do that. Can we go to the Tardis first?

DOCTOR: Dawn is here. What happens in daylight, Mildew?  
MILDEW: We are still here. A little paler perhaps, less tangible maybe, but we are here nevertheless.  
GHOST 2: We are always here.  
MILDEW: You are back, my friend.  
GHOST 2: I've been thinking. He didn't do anything to save my brother back at the mansion.  
MILDEW: Your brother knew the risks. Haunting the Applewhite sisters, he was taking his life into his hands.  
GHOST 2: As I see it, this fellow owes us.  
DOCTOR: Believe me please. I'm appalled at what happened to your brother, and I will do what I can.  
GHOST 2: Not good enough. Easy to promise when you're alive, when you're in the land of the living, but what are you going to do, eh?  
DOCTOR: What do you want me to do? Tell me what you want me to do.

(Knocking.)

MEL: Doctor? Come on, wake up. You said you weren't a tortoise. You always say you don't need sleep. Doctor?  
MARIA: Melanie dear, do hurry.  
MEL: No sign of him.  
MARIA: We must move, Melanie. We need to get to the place.  
ELIZA: Oh, forget the Doctor. Forget him.  
MEL: But he wouldn't just  
ELIZA: Headstrong, isn't he? Probably jealous that he won't get his dearest wish. Not like you, Melanie. Melanie the hero.  
MEL: Perhaps... perhaps he's gone on ahead.  
MARIA: That's it, my dear. The silly man has set off early. He wants to get there before us.  
MEL: I suppose he might have. It is the kind of thing he might do.  
MARIA: Come along, my dear. Back aboard our carriage.

GHOST 2: We could make him, Mildew. We could force him, couldn't we? To take the pressure off us for a while.  
MILDEW: What are you talking about? Tell me.  
GHOST 2: Feed him to the Wishing Beast.  
MILDEW: What?  
GHOST 2: We don't know him. What does he matter to us? He's no one to us.  
MILDEW: The Doctor is going to help us.  
DOCTOR: Any way I can.  
GHOST 2: This will be the best way. Feed him to the Wishing Beast.  
DOCTOR: (sigh) Then perhaps you're right.

MEL: What's going on? Are we there already?  
ELIZA: We need to stop. We need to stop in the village. For supplies.  
MARIA: Bring the vacuum, Eliza.  
ELIZA: My vacuum. My dear vacuum cleaner.  
MEL: What village? All I can see is a kind of mist.  
FEMALE GHOST: Melanie. Melanie.  
MARIA: Look harder, Melanie. Can't you see them? Stare into the mist.  
MEL: What? I can hear them.  
FEMALE GHOST: Please help us. Help us defend ourselves.  
MEL: Hello?  
MARIA: Shades and spirits, attend to me.  
GHOST 2: You killed him. You sucked away his essence.  
FEMALE GHOST: Leave us. Leave us be, you harlots, you witches.  
MEL: I can see them, hundreds of them.  
MARIA: Yes. See their horrible spectral faces and fingers, their haunted eyes. Look on them, Melanie. Aren't these the creatures that scared you in the wood?  
FEMALE GHOST: Tell them to go. Melanie, please.  
MEL: Why have we come here? Maria? Eliza?  
ELIZA: Tributes. We gather tributes to our poor brave brother. It's what we always do.  
MARIA: Eliza, get the vacuum going.  
GHOST 2: Don't let them. Help us, please!

ELIZA: Stir and stir around. Suck them up, suck them up.  
FEMALE GHOST: No! Melanie, help us! Listen to us!  
MARIA: Listen to me, half-people of Ghost Town. Give up a handful of your pathetic number and I will leave the rest of you alone, for now. Just give us a few tributes for us to take to the Wishing Beast.  
FEMALE GHOST: You will leave nothing left of us.  
GHOST 2: We are dead. We are already dead. You can, you must leave us to rest in peace.  
MARIA: Won't you listen to reason? Won't some of you step forward?  
MEL: Stop it, Maria. I didn't know you were going to do this. I can hear them now, dying.  
MARIA: They're already dead. Shut her up, Eliza. Lift off your glasses.  
ELIZA: With pleasure, dearest sister.  
MEL: (gasps) Your eyes! They're  
(Energy sound, Mel screams.)  
ELIZA: My eyes, my sore eyes, are deadly, Melanie. Do as I say. Do what I want.  
(Vacuum working.)  
MARIA: We'll take the first ones we see. We'll take as many as we like. My, won't the Wishing Beast be pleased. We're bringing him a banquet today.  
ELIZA: Suck'em up, tee hee. Stir them about.  
FEMALE GHOST: Melanie! Nooo!  
MEL: Eliza, give me that. Stop it. Leave them alone!  
MARIA: Beware, my dear. It isn't your turn yet.  
DOCTOR: And I'm here to see that it never does become Mel's turn  
MARIA: Doctor!  
MEL: Doctor, you're here.  
DOCTOR: Yes, and I'm a lot wiser as to what's going on, and I don't like any of it one bit.  
MARIA: Oh, spare us the bleeding heart, Doctor. Don't you think others haven't realised what you have?  
ELIZA: Bleeding, bleeding, bleeding heart.  
MARIA: But it didn't help them, did it? They were greedy. They wanted their dearest wish, didn't they?  
ELIZA: We all want our dearest wishes.  
MARIA: Realising the so-called truth won't help you, Doctor.  
MEL: Eliza, switch that thing off.  
ELIZA: No. Never. Too much fun.  
DOCTOR: We said enough! Now switch this thing off.  
MARIA: No!  
(Vacuum powers down.)  
DOCTOR: You're killing them, a little bit at a time.  
MARIA: So? They aren't important. Just ghosts. Just shadows.  
DOCTOR: They are people you have lured here, dragged here with promises of rewards.  
MARIA: Then it's their stupidity and greed to blame, isn't it?  
MEL: That's rather brutal, isn't it?  
MARIA: Who cares. Who cares what you think.  
ELIZA: Who are you, anyway? Perhaps I should  
MARIA: Spare your sore eyes, my dear.  
(Weird organic trumpeting noise, slow stomping.)  
MARIA: He is here. He has come to us.  
MEL: Oh my God!  
DOCTOR: Ah. Rather impressive, isn't he?  
MARIA: And now, Doctor, Melanie, it's time for your just reward.

### [Part Three]

MEL: Get away from me. You two make me sick. I can't believe that I listened to what you were saying, even for a second.  
MARIA: Daniel, Daniel, don't come too close, my dear. Our darling boy.  
ELIZA: We are your sisters, your loving sisters. And we bring you souls. Fresh souls again.  
DOCTOR: Fresh from your ghastly vacuum cleaner, I suppose.  
MARIA: Let me just switch it from suck to blow, and suck them up, Daniel dear. All these poor pathetic wraiths.  
DOCTOR: It's horrible! I can't let you do this. Give me that thing.  
MARIA: Keep back, Doctor. Eliza.  
MEL: Careful, Doctor. Eliza can shoot laser beams from her eyes.  
DOCTOR: But can't you see this is wrong?  
MARIA: One step closer, Doctor, and Eliza will fry Mel to a cinder.  
ELIZA: Burn, burn, burn!

DOCTOR: It seems that we are powerless to intervene in this disgusting spectacle.

MEL: Those poor souls, being sucked up by that creature. It seems incredible that it's really their brother.

DOCTOR: Yes. Poor boy.

MILDEW: Poor, Doctor? You look at that monstrosity feeding on the souls of my fellow villagers and feel pity for him?

DOCTOR: Ah, Mel, this transparent colleague of mine, his name is Mildew. He's been filling me in on some of the background here

MILDEW: I cannot stand here, Doctor, while they do this. Look at them.

MARIA: Our darling Daniel. Eat well, my dear.

ELIZA: Suck that essence. Draw out the goodness. Goodness, oh.

DOCTOR: It's gone too far. I've seen enough of this. Sisters!

MEL: What are you going to do, Doctor?

MARIA: Ah, the brave Doctor steps forward. Do you want a taste of our vacuum too, Doctor?

MEL: Doctor, tell me what you're going to do.

DOCTOR: The only thing I can do, Mel.

MARIA: Melanie, you must come here. Tell the Beast your dearest wish.

(The sisters laugh.)

MEL: Not on your life.

DOCTOR: No, she wont. But I will. It has to be me.

MEL: Doctor, no!

MILDEW: I think he is right, Mel. The Wishing Beast won't go unless he

DOCTOR: Unless he is appeased, and he still looks pretty hungry to me.

ELIZA: He's hungry. He wants more and more.

DOCTOR: And I suspect a Time Lord from Gallifrey would go some way to filling up that rumbling void in his belly, eh?

ELIZA: A Lord of Time. Oh!

MARIA: How wonderful. And we thought he was just a companion, didn't we, Eliza? We thought Mel was the one.

DOCTOR: Just take me to the Wishing Beast. I'm sure I have more than enough essence to satisfy him for a while.

MARIA: Oh, more than enough, Doctor.

ELIZA: More than, much more than.

DOCTOR: And if I give myself up now, will you promise me, will you give me your oath, that there will be no more killings?

ELIZA: No more lurings, murders? Oh, impossible. We love it. We love what we do.

MARIA: Just think of it, Eliza. A Lord of Time giving all his lives for the sake of our brother! We must honour his conditions.

ELIZA: Marvellous. Marvellous! A Time Lord..

MEL: No, Doctor, I'm not letting you do this.

DOCTOR: Mel, don't interfere.

MEL: Is this one of your plans? One of your fantastic wheezes? You've got something up your sleeve, haven't you?

DOCTOR: Perhaps. I'm going now.

MEL: You can't.

MILDEW: Let him do it, Mel.

MEL: Oh, shut up, you. You and all the other ghosts, well, you're already dead. The Doctor isn't.

DOCTOR: Mel, these ghosts, they've a physical presence. Against all odds they're clinging on to life, clinging on to this ghastly benighted rock. That doesn't make them lesser beings. It means they need protecting. And if my death is what it takes to protect them, even for a little while longer

MEL: Oh, spare us the noble sacrifice speech. Your dying won't change things here.

DOCTOR: You must listen, Mel. When I'm gone, the sisters will be after the Tardis. They will try to take it. It must *not* fall into their hands, do you hear me?

MEL: Oh Doctor, you really mean it, don't you? This is really goodbye.

DOCTOR: I think it might well be, Mel.

MARIA: Doctor, ready yourself.

DOCTOR: I have said my goodbyes.

MARIA: Walk right up to him, Doctor. Walk up to his open jaws, close your eyes. You will feel yourself draining away rather gently, rather peacefully. There, there. Your life has been long and hectic.

ELIZA: A busy life. So busy, busy. You can rest now, in the arms of the Beast.

DOCTOR: Yes. I can go now.

MEL: Doctor, please! There must be another way.

MARIA: She cannot help you now. Be content, Doctor. Your friends are safe with us. Let yourself fade and trickle away, and you will wake up... elsewhere.

MEL: No! Doctor!

MARIA: There. He is gone. He's gone, in one huge gollop.

DANIEL: Look at them out there. What a drama. There's always a drama.

DOCTOR: Who's that? Oh, can't you let me die in peace?

DANIEL: Now, you didn't really think you'd be dead, did you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Oh, what are you talking about? And where are we?

DANIEL: Inside the Wishing Beast. Inside me, so to speak.

DOCTOR: Are you Daniel Applewhite?

DANIEL: My reputation precedes me.

DOCTOR: Are you proud of that?

DANIEL: Hmm. Look at my sisters out there. Just look at them. They are pitiful. I don't want them to lie and connive for me.

DOCTOR: You'd die without their conniving.

DANIEL: Would that be such a bad thing?

DOCTOR: You tell me, Daniel.

DANIEL: Our lives are forfeit, and hideously prolonged. You wouldn't believe how long we've been clinging to this rock, grubbing for sustenance.

DOCTOR: Try me.

DANIEL: Over three centuries. There, does that shock you?

DOCTOR: Hardly. What shocks me is giving myself up to be eaten by some dragon-like creature, and instead of being devoured, ending up in this... what is it? Kind of Limbo?

DANIEL: Welcome to the Wishing Beast.

DOCTOR: You're a kind of hybrid. A compound being, made up of the original Daniel Applewhite and

DANIEL: Why did you give yourself up like that?

DOCTOR: I wanted to meet you. And lets just say I had a hunch you wanted to meet me.

DANIEL: Astute.

DOCTOR: It's been known. So?

DANIEL: I want to stop being the Wishing Beast and... I want to leave this place for ever.

DOCTOR: Ah.

(Mel is crying.)

MILDEW: Mel, I don't know what to say to you. I only knew him for a few hours.

MEL: There's nothing you can say. You know, I knew this had to happen some day. I just didn't expect it to be today.

MARIA: No, you didn't, did you, Melanie.

MEL: You don't understand. You can't understand what it's like to care for someone, not if this is how you react. You claim to love your brother, but

ELIZA: We do love him. We love his oily golden scales, his little ruby eyes.

MARIA: And we loved him fiercely before he ever became the Wishing Beast. Don't presume to lecture us on love, Melanie. Is that what you'd have wished for? Love? Someone of your own to care for?

MEL: Just drop it, will you, Maria?

MARIA: Because now you are alone, aren't you, Melanie? You're more alone than you have ever been before.

DANIEL: When we crash-landed here, there was very little. The house, the woods. We landed and we were the only survivors. I was a child, my sisters were in their late teens.

DOCTOR: I can't imagine what it was like, how scared you must have been.

DANIEL: Me? I thought it was a game. I was young enough to be excited by it all.

DOCTOR: I see.

DANIEL: We had to eat what we could find in the wreckage. I think that's what robbed my sisters of their senses. Eliza had gone blind in the crash.

DOCTOR: What about the Wishing Beast?

DANIEL: I became the Wishing Beast. After a year here, a voice called out to me in the night. A voice from somewhere on this world. My sisters couldn't hear it.

BEAST: Daniel. Daniel. Come with me, Daniel. Come to find your destiny.

DANIEL: Where?

BEAST: Beyond the forest, before the mountains, there is a lake. A boat will be waiting for you. It will bring you to my land.

DANIEL: But why? What are you?

BEAST: I can grant you your dearest wish, Daniel. And I know what it is.

DANIEL: Tell me.

BEAST: You want to be able to stand up to those nasty sisters of yours. You want to scare them. You want to boss them about like they boss you.

DANIEL: That's right. But I'm just a kid. They'll never listen.

BEAST: They will, one day. Walk through the woods, cross the bleak foothills, come to the lake, the boat. Come to my island.

DANIEL: What will I find there?

BEAST: Me. And I will grant your wish.

DANIEL: You haven't proved that you know what my wish is, yet.

BEAST: Ah yes, of course. Your wish, Daniel Applewhite, is to be a monster.

DOCTOR: Well, you went. And you certainly got your dearest wish.

DANIEL: I crept out through the woods, and the foothills. I found the lake and the brightly coloured boat. I set sail and arrived on the island, and the Wishing Beast...

DOCTOR: Yes?

DANIEL: Was just a box. A featureless white box that made words inside my head.

DOCTOR: How very strange.

DANIEL: He never said what he was or where he came from, just that he had dropped out of another time and another galaxy, and he had amazing powers. They were so advanced it looked like sorcery to me. And he needed to bond with me. Together, we could form the combined being that would scare my sisters into doing my bidding. Together, we would fuse into the Wishing Beast.

DOCTOR: And now after 300 years, you've had enough. You want to stop feasting on innocent souls. But the question is, will the original Wishing Beast let you?

ELIZA: What is the matter with him?

MARIA: He sleeps. But those noises, like he's having nightmares.

ELIZA: Indigestion. The Doctor is giving him indigestion. Ha!

MEL: Oh look, just shut up, the pair of you.

MARIA: Melanie dear, you mustn't lose your patience with us. We are your new travelling companions.

ELIZA: We must all get along together, now we are friends.

MARIA: All aboard the Tardis together.

MEL: If you think for one second that I would let either of you two wretched harridans aboard the Tardis...

MARIA: And Mildew too. If it would make it any easier, we would allow you to bring your horrid little ghostly friend along with you.

ELIZA: Oh, do we have to? Do we have to have the ghostly man?

MARIA: And... Where is Mildew? Where's he gone?

MILDEW: Here.

(Vacuum starts up, the sisters cry out.)

ELIZA: Stop him! Stop that creature!

MILDEW: I'm just a ghost to you sisters, aren't I? But I can concentrate, I can grasp things, seize control.

MEL: No, Mildew, that's not the way

MARIA: Please, I beg of you.

MILDEW: Maximum power. Die, you harpies!

MEL: Mildew, no!

MILDEW: Suck on this!

(The sisters cry out.)

DANIEL: I want very little. I have one very small wish left.

DOCTOR: Hmm? And that is?

DANIEL: I want to melt away like the morning frost. I want to fade away, dissipate, and die.

DOCTOR: I don't believe the morning frost ever melts here on this world.

DANIEL: True. We are in Limbo. Equally, the Wishing Beast at the heart of me doesn't want to melt. You're right, Doctor. It will not let me go.

DOCTOR: Oh dear. So, what happens then?

DANIEL: Then I need to find a replacement, don't I? For me to slip away quietly into oblivion, I need to find someone to stand in my stead.

DOCTOR: I see. And do you have your eye on someone?

DANIEL: Too modest, Doctor.

MILDEW [OC]: Die, you harpies!

DANIEL: What is going on out there?

MEL [OC]: Mildew, no!

DOCTOR: Very strange, staring out of a dragon's eyes. Looks like Mildew's trying to vacuum up your sisters.

DANIEL: Good. I hope he kills them dead.

DOCTOR: What, you hate them so much? So why haven't you tried to kill them yourself?

DANIEL: Oh, they have curious powers. They held your ship here, didn't they? They blocked the communications of the ghosts getting to you, for a while.

DOCTOR: They did that?

DANIEL: Their minds are very powerful. They could stop me doing anything untoward. I could never have harmed them, much as I truly wished I could.

BEAST: No, Daniel. You mustn't say such things. Your sisters needed those powers to serve us. That's why we granted them those wishes.

DOCTOR: Who is this?

DANIEL: The Beast inside, Doctor.

BEAST: You have come to join us, Doctor, here, within the body of the Wishing Beast.

DANIEL: He is my jailer. That is what the Wishing Beast is to me.

BEAST: Daniel, Daniel, I have given you a good life. I have made you into another order of being, far greater than you were before.

DANIEL: Look, Wishing Beast. Look who's here. Forget me. Feast your eyes on him.

DOCTOR: I think he means me. Hello.

BEAST: The Doctor. Ah, I have been watching. I have been watching him a good long while.

DANIEL: I brought him to you, Wishing Beast. I made him come here. Can I go now? Can I? Will you let me slip away at last?

BEAST: Daniel, why would you leave us? Don't you love being us, and all we can do?

DANIEL: Listen to me. I wish to go. Does what I want mean so little to you?

BEAST: Of course I listen. I want to make you happy.

DOCTOR: He's lying. Well, it's hardly a symbiotic relationship. He doesn't care for your welfare. He's a parasite.

DANIEL: What?

DOCTOR: The Wishing Beast has been using you, Daniel. And now you're offering me the chance to be used by him too.

DANIEL: Oh please, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I think death would be preferable to giving my whole self up to a creature like that, whatever it is or wants to be.

BEAST: What?

DOCTOR: Whatever you are, Wishing Beast, whichever hellish dimension coughed you up and spat you out, what kind of existence is this? Preying on souls and the essence of innocent beings?

BEAST: Enough, Doctor. Enough.

DANIEL: I'm sorry, Doctor. He is a monster.

DOCTOR: It's all right, Daniel. I've faced far worse.

DANIEL: Please, can you stop him? Dare you put a stop to him?

DOCTOR: Oh, I can always dare, Daniel. So can you, you know. It's all about choices. All about growing up and realising what you really want.

DANIEL: Please, Wishing Beast, don't take him. Don't destroy his life like you have mine.

BEAST: What?! Oh, you've changed your tune. How ungrateful you are, boy.

DOCTOR: I don't think he's a boy any longer. After 300 years he's finally grown up a bit.

DANIEL: The Doctor has shown me. Meeting him has changed everything. I can see now, see what it was I have subsumed myself to. Your wickedness, Wishing Beast.

MEL: Mildew, no. You're killing them.

ELIZA: Aiee, sister. What is happening to us?

MARIA: Eliza dear, are your poor sore eyes rested enough by now?

ELIZA: Oh yes, yes. My poor sore eyes.

(Laser sound.)

MILDEW: No! You will not get me like that. No, please. Please, I'll stop.

(Vacuum off, lasers continue.)

MILDEW: Oh, you're burning me away! Argh! Stop it. Please.

ELIZA: It is daytime. Ghosts have no place in the daytime. Burn away like mist and fog. Go!

MEL: Stop it. You're killing hi!

MARIA: Like he was killing us. Look at us, Mel. He has reduced us to wraiths.

(Mildew's scream fades away. Lasers stop.)

MEL: He's gone.

MARIA: Well done, Eliza. Quickly, put your glasses back on.

BEAST: Sisters. Sisters, come before me.

ELIZA: Daniel.

BEAST: You have been depleted, my sisters. The ghost almost destroyed you. What can you do now, in this state?



MARIA [OC]: I don't know. There's hardly anything left of us.

ELIZA [OC]: Daniel, save us, Daniel.

DANIEL: No, Wishing Beast. Sisters, listen. All these years we have been used by the Wishing Beast. We've wasted our lives. We've ruined countless others. It is time for me to die.

MARIA [OC]: Daniel, no! You mustn't die.

BEAST: What is this? What are you saying?

DANIEL: Wishes are the most powerful things in the universe. That's the one good thing I have learned in all those years. And I have never been asked what my own wish was. Right at the start, I was. I made a child's wish to turn into a monster and scare my sisters. But now I make an adult wish. The Doctor has made me see that I can do that at last.

DOCTOR: Tell them, Daniel. Tell your sisters your dearest wish.

DANIEL: I wish to die, and for the Wishing Beast to die with me. Doctor?

DOCTOR: I'm here.

DANIEL: This box, this is the Wishing Beast.

DOCTOR: This is it?

DANIEL: Take it outside. Break the bond, open the box. Call my sisters in.

DOCTOR: And that's it?

DANIEL: And that will be an end to all of us.

MARIA [OC]: Daniel, don't forsake us. We need you. We are your sisters.

(Groans and wheezes.)

ELIZA: The Wishing Beast opens its jaws. Maria!

MARIA: Oh!

DOCTOR: And with one bound he was free.

MEL: Doctor! You're alive! You did it, you're here.

DOCTOR: Stand back, Mel. There's something I have to do.

MEL: What have you got there? What's going on?

DOCTOR: I'm going to open the box.

(Whoosh!)

MEL: The Wishing Beast, it's gone!

DOCTOR: This box is the real Wishing Beast, and it's very hungry indeed.

MARIA: Don't let it take us!

ELIZA: Please, Doctor! Mel! Not poor us.

(Reverse whoosh.)

DANIEL: I can go. They take my place inside the Wishing Beast. Goodbye, Doctor. (fades away) Thank you, Doctor.

(The Doctor sighs.)

MEL: That's it? There's nothing left.

DOCTOR: Not even a ghost. He was only being sustained by the Wishing Beast.

MEL: But that box, that's the Wishing Beast?

DOCTOR: Mmm hmm. A highly advanced being. A fugitive from some other dimension. And now it's got what little is left of two wicked sisters sealed inside it.

MEL: But we can't just, well, you know, leave it here, can we?

DOCTOR: I suggest we seal it up in the Applewhite mansion, lock it away where it can do no harm.

MEL: No harm? But what if someone else lands here and

DOCTOR: I don't think anyone else ever will. Like Daniel, this place was only ever sustained by the Wishing Beast's powers.

MEL: And what about Daniel?

DOCTOR: Got what he wanted. Peace at last. He never wanted to be a big slaving monster, well, not after the age of ten or so anyway, but he'd trapped himself.

MEL: Where did the dragon thing go?

DOCTOR: It wasn't really here. Not entirely.

MEL: And what about you? You're alive. You didn't sacrifice yourself at all.

DOCTOR: Did I scare you, Mel?

MEL: Mmm.

DOCTOR: I scared myself.

MEL: You? Honestly. Oh, what shall we do with that vacuum cleaner thing?

DOCTOR: We'd better seal that away too, like a tomb of forgotten wretched souls. Poor Mildew and his friends. So much loss.

MEL: It's all gone very quiet.

DOCTOR: There's nothing much here on this old rock. A forest, and old creaking house, a few spirits drifting about in the shadows. Soon I imagine there'll be even less than that without the power of the Wishing Beast. This last remaining shard of a world, this awful splinter.

MEL: I think I'd like to go quite soon.

DOCTOR: Yes. As far away as we can possibly get.

MEL: Somewhere fabulous.

DOCTOR: Ah, as in like a fable? A fairy tale? A ghost story?

MEL: As in fabulous, Doctor. Somewhere fabulous. That's where I want to be right now.

# The Vanity Box, by Paul Magrs

A Big Finish Productions Dr Who Audio Drama, released July 2007

(The Tardis materialises where folks know how to speak proper, with short vowels and all. Welcome to Coronation Street land.)

NESTA: And that's new as well. Since when was there a Police Box on the corner of Warren Street.

WINNIE: I'm sure it weren't there before, Nesta.

NESTA: Well, happen I won't be sad to see a few more bobbies on t'beat round here. It's getting proper rough.

WINNIE: What about Renee Murgatroyd when she had that do under the arches? He only got away with half a crown, a bag of toffees and some booties she'd knitted for their Samantha.

NESTA: I think it's the thrill of it, in't it, with some of them.

WINNIE: Oh don't. It makes me shiver just thinking of it. Some daft hooligan jumping out of t'dark.

NESTA: You'd be in no danger. And I can fettle anyone. Get a shift on, Winnie. I've got a raging thirst on here. I'm buying.

WINNIE: Wonders'll never cease. Would you say that Police Box was always there?

NESTA: I shouldn't be at all surprised. They let their dogs wet up against anything these days.

(Pub door opens and closes, Tardis door opens.)

MEL: Oh. Somewhere fabulous, indeed. When you said the Sixties, I was thinking of Ready Steady Go, Carnaby Street. You know, somewhere groovy.

DOCTOR: Groovy?

MEL: Yeah.

DOCTOR: It's 1965. I believe that's groovy enough for anyone.

MEL: It looks like LS Lowry.

DOCTOR: Perceptive. This is Salford.

MEL: Oh.

(Tardis door closes.)

DOCTOR: I don't think anything's swinging much, yet, around this way.

MEL: Oh well, I could do with a quieter time after all the excitement recently. Self-sacrifice and all. Really

Doctor, I know you're fond of melodrama, but you really had me believing back there that you had

DOCTOR: Fed myself to the Wishing Beast. Well, I did, didn't I? But luckily it all worked out for the best.

MEL: I'm glad we got away, anyway. And now I want a rest. I'm starving, actually.

DOCTOR: Ah. Corner shop, end of the street. They will sell you what I believe is known locally as a barm.

MEL: Oh, all right. And you'll be...?

DOCTOR: There. The Sailor's End. In the public bar.

(Shop bell.)

LILY: Get that door closed behind you. It's perishing out.

(Door closes.)

MEL: Sorry about that.

LILY: Can I help? I was just about to shut up shop.

MEL: Oh, I was just after a... what was it the Doctor called it?

(Door opens and closes.)

LILY: (gasps) As I live and breathe. Bessy Tiplington, what on Earth have you gone and done to yourself?

BESSY: Now then, chuck, be honest. What'd you think?

LILY: Here, let me see. Do us a twirl.

BESSY: Ta dah.

LILY: It's amazing.

BESSY: I can hardly get me head round it, can you?

LILY: It's like magic. Where've you been?

BESSY: Who's this? I've not seen you round here.

MEL: I'm Mel. I'm just visiting. You look lovely, by the way, your hair and everything. But tell me, why is it like magic?

LILY: (sotto) Southerner.

BESSY: Mmm. Funny accent she's got. And what are you wearing, luvvie? You're a bit Day-Glo, aren't you?

LILY: (sotto) It must be what's all the thing in the South. What's them woolly efforts round her ankles?

BESSY: Any road, we were talking about me, weren't we? And I wouldn't say this little transformation of mine was magical exactly. I'd say it was more like a blessed miracle, wouldn't you, Lily?

LILY: I would, Bessy.

MEL: But I don't understand. Why?

LILY: Tell her, Bessy.

BESSY: Would you believe I were 56?

DOCTOR: Hello. Hello? Oh, I was never very good at catching the barmaid's eye. Oh, come on. Hello!

WINNIE: Excuse me, pushing past. He knocked the back of me chair with his tartan derriere.

NESTA: This is the snug. We don't have men in the snug. This is the sole preserve of ladies like us.

DOCTOR: Oh, excuse me, ladies. The saloon bar is jam-packed. I can't get any attention.

NESTA: You do surprise me, got up like that.

WINNIE: What do you think you look like?

DOCTOR: Am I bothering you?

NESTA: Frankly, yes.

DOCTOR: Then I shall be out of your hairnet forthwith.

NESTA: Oh, hark at Lord Hunca Dunca over there.

DOCTOR: Hello? I'd like a pint, please.

NESTA: Anyway, as I was saying, Winnie. I was hanging right over me back fence to get a better view. Well, you know how high that fence is, but I had to see what was going on in that yard.

WINNIE: The yard at the back of the salon?

NESTA: That's right. You know how me back juts right out over there, and well, since that new bloke's took over the salon there's been some right rum goings on.

WINNIE: The work of the Devil, you were saying before.

NESTA: Aye, well, I would go that far, I would, yes.

DOCTOR: Look, I'm dying of thirst over here.

BARMAID: Yes sir? As you can see, the whole pub is heaving.

DOCTOR: I'd like a pint of blackcurrant squash, please. Water, not soda.

NESTA: (sotto) Southerner.

DOCTOR: Southerner?

NESTA: Aye, that's what you sound like to me.

WINNIE: Oh, don't talk to him, Nesta. I think he's a funny fella. He's been let out of somewhere, I reckon.

DOCTOR: You were saying something about the work of the Devil?

NESTA: Happen I was.

WINNIE: He'll be something to do with the salon, I reckon. Friends with that fancy bloke who runs the place.

NESTA: Could be.

(Door opens and closes.)

NESTA: Eee, will you look at that!

WINNIE: What? I can't see. Who is it coming in?

NESTA: That common Bessy Tiplington, swanning about in all her glad-rags.

WINNIE: Oh, what's new about that?

NESTA: You know how she usually looks. Like mutton dressed as lamb.

WINNIE: I do.

NESTA: Now she just looks like lamb dressed as lamb.

WINNIE: You what?

NESTA: She's been to that Vanity Box, hasn't she. I reckon that's what she's done. My God.

DOCTOR: She's been where?

MEL: Doctor.

DOCTOR: Mel! There you are. Allow me to introduce my very good friends

NESTA: No friends of yours, chum. Who's this now? Who does she think she's dressed like?

WINNIE: Suddenly everyone's in the snug.

MEL: Doctor, there's something weird going on.

DOCTOR: Oh, I just wanted a nice sit-down. What is it, Mel?

MEL: At this place called the Vanity Box, across the street.

NESTA: That's what I was saying. My back yard juts over its back yard, and it's like I was telling me friend Winnie here. There's some funny things going on that hairdressers. It didn't used to be like that, back when Renee had the run of it. But now? Oh, it's very peculiar like.

WINNIE: But I don't see what it's got to do with these strangers, Nesta.

NESTA: They look to me like they'd know all about funny goings-on.

DOCTOR: Oh, indeed. Mel and I are often up to our eyes in funny peculiar.

NESTA: I thought so.

(Strong Mancunian accent trying to be a bit French.)

COIFFURE: That's it, ladies. We'll soon have you looking absolutely marvellous. Just sit back and relax and let your cares fade away. Have a violet cream, Mrs Hunsworth. Here, I'll turn that dryer down. We don't want you frizzling up, do we? (laughs, door opens and closes) Oh, a new lady to see to. 'Allo, my dear. Good evening.

LILY: I've heard tell that you do a good job here.

COIFFURE: Here at the Vanity Box, we strive for perfection. I, Monsieur Coiffure, like to send my ladies home ecstatic.

LILY: Ecstatic, is it? Well, I'm Lily Cook, by the way, from the corner shop. Pleased to meet you.

COIFFURE: Enchanté.

LILY: I was a regular here when Renee ran the shop.

COIFFURE: Ah yes, Renee Scallop. Very tragic, what became of her.

LILY: It was indeed. I was going to keep right away from this place, you know, out of respect for poor dead and decapitated Renee, tossed off the viaduct like that like a bag of rags, but I saw what you did to Bessy Tiplington this afternoon.

COIFFURE: Ah, Miss Tiplington was a particular triumph.

LILY: And I just couldn't resist. Here, let me get me headscarf off. What do you think?

COIFFURE: Madame?

LILY: How's about lopping twenty years me, eh? Do you think you could manage it?

COIFFURE: Madame, nothing would be easier here at the Vanity Box.

LILY: I want exactly the same as Bessy had. I'll show her. She's not the only glamour puss round here. In my day, I could turn a few heads.

COIFFURE: Indeed. Bon. Park yourself here, madame. We'll give you exactly what Bessy had. But you must sit here, in this special alcove, behind this curtain.

LILY: In private, eh? Must be a very secret process.

COIFFURE: Exclusive, madame, is how I like to think of it.

LILY: Lovely.

COIFFURE: Bon. And now if madame is comfy, I shall bring out the miraculous tool that will put a smile back on madame's face.

LILY: Oh, go on, then.

COIFFURE: Mrs Cook, I give you, voilà! The Vanity Box.

DOCTOR: Come along, Mel. Don't twist anything walking on the cobbles.

MEL: Oh, what an unfriendly bunch they were in that pub.

DOCTOR: Oh, that's just their manner. Ah look, there we are. That excessively chintzy establishment with the lit-up front. Monsieur Coiffure indeed.

MEL: Do you really think there's something untoward going on?

DOCTOR: Nobody can regress people like that. This was more than a make-over. You saw the way people reacted to Bessy Tiplington's entrance into the Sailor's End.

MEL: Mmm, I did. I was right behind.

DOCTOR: They were, to use a local term, gob-smacked.

MEL: You're right. What do you reckon? Some primitive form of time travel?

DOCTOR: I don't know. First we'd better check out this place. This curious salon.

(Scream.)

MEL: That was from inside.

DOCTOR: Come on!

(Women talking all at once, cutting tool noises.)

COIFFURE: Do calm down, ladies. You've got me all of a lather. Cease this kerfuffle at once, I tell you.

DOCTOR: What's going on here?

(Feet running out, door closes.)

COIFFURE: Please, ladies, come back.

DOCTOR: What's all the screaming about?

COIFFURE: Nothing I can't handle, my dear sir. Now...

(Noise stops.)

COIFFURE: Oh, what a nasty little provincial place this is.

MEL: And what a horrible man you are. We only came in here to see if we could help. We heard screams and all sorts.

COIFFURE: All in the service of creating beauty, one must suffer.

DOCTOR: Where is she? What's happening to her? Bring her out at once.

(Curtain drawn.)

COIFFURE: Ah yes, Madame Cook. Time we fetched you out of the Vanity Box.

MEL: It's a box on her head.

COIFFURE: Get back at once. Did I invite you into my glamorous annexe?

DOCTOR: Get back, Mel. Let me see. Good God, what have you done to her?

COIFFURE: Ah, but just look what I have done to her with my miraculous machine. Stand up, Lily Cook. Come and have a look at yourself.

LILY: (gasps) Wow. Monsieur Coiffure, I feel... wonderful.

COIFFURE: I have taken a full twenty five years from you. Are you satisfied, ma petite choufleur?

LILY: But I never looked like this, even back then, Monsieur Coiffure. You are a genius.  
COIFFURE: I know, I know. (continues in background)  
MEL: What do you think, Doctor?  
DOCTOR: I'm not sure I'd have gone with that hairdo but yes, I think she looks very nice.  
MEL: I meant, do you still think it's funny business?  
DOCTOR: Of course. I want to get a closer look at that machine.  
COIFFURE: Ah ah! Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah. Hands off. Nobody touches the Vanity Box apart from me. Now, be off with you, you strange pair. Go on, scram.

NESTA: Aye, well, Doctor, you think right.  
DOCTOR: It stands to reason, doesn't it?  
NESTA: You have a look about you of a clever fella.  
DOCTOR: I took one look at you back in the snug at the Sailor's End and I thought if anyone knows everything that's going on, it's Nesta Trubshaw. She might be a bit abrupt in her manner...  
NESTA: Aye, that I can be.  
DOCTOR: But she's the eyes and ears and very heart of this place. So we've come round yours to ask you, Mrs Trubshaw  
NESTA: Nesta, please, Doctor.  
DOCTOR: Ah. Whether you know anything about the wicked goings-on at the salon.  
NESTA: I'll pour t'tea. Well, I don't hold with unnecessary titivation, Doctor. It's nowt but ungodly self-display and indulgence. There's nothing wrong with being clean and smart, but some of these women - I'm not naming names - they're getting obsessed with what they look like. It's unhealthy. Now you're telling me that even Lily from t'corner shop's had herself done.  
MEL: We were there in the salon when her new face was revealed.  
NESTA: New face. What would anyone want a new face for?  
DOCTOR: Indeed.  
NESTA: But I don't understand what this jumped up Teasy-Weasy's doing to 'em. What's all this about a box over their heads?  
DOCTOR: It's a glowing, hovering cube thing that he sticks over their heads and it changes them forever.  
NESTA: Like magic?  
MEL: Except it's not.  
DOCTOR: It's like very advanced alien technology, I'm afraid, here in Salford in the mid 1960s.  
NESTA: Well, you live and learn You're quite sure, Doctor?  
DOCTOR: I am indeed, Nesta. And to me, it looks like something alive.  
NESTA: Alive?  
DOCTOR: I need to examine that object. What's it doing? Is it taking over these ladies' minds? And if so, what for? Is it creating an army of provincial dolly-birds? And what's the point of that?  
NESTA: I don't think you're making much sense, Doctor. Alien wotsit? Do you mean Russia, or outer space, or what? Have a chocolate bourbon. I get these in, but I can't have them, not with my teeth.  
DOCTOR: Nesta, will you help me? I've got to get into that salon, under cover, and get a closer look.  
MEL: Doctor, I could go in instead of you.  
DOCTOR: I don't think anyone would believe you need a make-over, Mel. And besides, I think it's going to be chillingly dangerous.  
NESTA: Actually, I can manage a bourbon if I dunk it in me tea. I'll freshen the pot. Now, tell me how I can help you, Doctor. I'm not happy about this poodle parlour on our doorstep.  
DOCTOR: I want you to drag me up.

COIFFURE: Welcome, my dear. I am Monsieur Coiffure.  
DOCTOR: (higher pitch, speaking proper like) Yes, I know who you are, luvvie, and I know what you do, too. I've come for t'special treatment.  
COIFFURE: Oh yes?  
DOCTOR: Aye, and I don't just want a rinse and a set. I don't just want a new do, I want the whole shebang.  
COIFFURE: Shebang?  
DOCTOR: The full shenanigans.  
COIFFURE: Shenanigans?  
DOCTOR: I want what Bessy had, and t'same as Lily.  
COIFFURE: Do you indeed?  
DOCTOR: I want regressing. I want to be a slip of a girl again.  
COIFFURE: If madame would step this way, then, beyond the nylon curtain.  
DOCTOR: Now, do you hear me, Monsieur Coiffure? I want to be same girl I was back on VE night, when two Yanks helped me to climb the statue of Victoria in Piccadilly Gardens.  
COIFFURE: Two Yanks, you say? Hmm. Yes, I'm sure that can be arranged. Sid down here.  
DOCTOR: Ooo, what's that thing?

COIFFURE: Do not be alarmed, madame. This is the Vanity Box  
DOCTOR: But it's floating through t'air by itself.  
COIFFURE: There's nothing to be alarmed about. Let it settle over your head, madame, and it will do its miraculous work.  
DOCTOR: Oh, I'm not so sure now. I'm not sure I want to (muffled)  
COIFFURE: I'd better turn the settings up. You, my girl, are going to take some doing.

DOCTOR: Ooo. Oh dear, I don't think I like this very much.  
VANITY BOX: Welcome to my lair. You have come here to shed your surplus time. Please relax. Let the years roll back and back and back. (continues under...)  
DOCTOR: Oh, what a strange sensation. It's like being licked all over, by a dragon's tongue.  
VANITY BOX: Don't resist it, my dear. I will take away the years you don't want. You will go back and back and back.  
DOCTOR: (normal) It's you, isn't it?  
VANITY BOX: I beg your pardon?  
DOCTOR: The Wishing Beast.  
VANITY BOX: Back and back and back through the years.  
DOCTOR: You don't remember me, do you? Ah well, you might get more than you bargained for, Wishing Beast.  
VANITY BOX: Back through the... centuries? Back, back. How long have you lived? How far do you go back?  
DOCTOR: A long, long time. Unimaginable centuries, Wishing Beast. I go right back. (laughs)  
VANITY BOX: (panicking) Back, back, back.

NESTA: What's going on in here? You can hear all that palaver t'other side of t'viaduct.  
MEL: Doctor?  
COIFFURE: I don't know. Zis has never happened before.  
NESTA: There's smoke coming out of that box.  
MEL: What have you done to him?  
COIFFURE: Him?  
MEL: That's the Doctor you've got under there.  
COIFFURE: Ze Vanity Box has gone haywire. I can't even switch it off.

DOCTOR: I thought I would fettle yer, with all my long-lived years.  
VANITY BOX: You are destroying my mind.  
DOCTOR: But how are you here? How did you ever get to be here, in Salford? I don't understand.  
VANITY BOX: Stop me. Leave me alone. Argh.  
(Explosion.)

MEL: Doctor!  
NESTA: That's torn it.  
COIFFURE: He's gone very still.  
NESTA: At least the smoke's stopped coming out.  
MEL: Take it off him. You're responsible for this. If the Doctor is hurt in any way...  
COIFFURE: What's he doing, coming into my salon dressed as an old woman anyway?  
MEL: Where did you get that thing?  
COIFFURE: He's destroyed it. My precious Vanity Box. It was all I had. It was gonna make my fortune. It gave me its promise.  
NESTA: Well, that's really gone and torn it.  
MEL: Doctor. Doctor, wake up. Please.  
COIFFURE: It was gonna make me famous. I was nothing before. I was just nowt. But the Vanity Box came to me. It said it had magical powers, and it did. That I'd be a star, far and wide.  
MEL: Shut up. What about the Doctor?  
COIFFURE: Now it's all ruined. I'm back to where I was. I'm back in the same place I was the day I found the miraculous box floating down the Ship Canal.  
DOCTOR: Oh! Oh, I'm back. I'm alive. Oh Mel, I've had the most dreadful make-over.  
MEL: But you're the same. You haven't changed.  
NESTA: It hasn't knocked any years off you, Doctor.  
DOCTOR: Thank goodness. I've seen inside that thing. I've seen what it does. It's a parasite, living off the hopes and fears and experiences of living human beings. That's what it's doing when it regresses people. It's leeching their psychic energy away.  
COIFFURE: But it works, doesn't it? It makes them look fabulous.  
MEL: That's evil. You make it sound as if it takes away their very souls.

DOCTOR: It takes years off them, literally. It shortens their lives for them.

COIFFURE: But it makes them look fantastic during the time they have. What's wrong with that?

DOCTOR: It's wicked, pure and simple. You're taking their lives off them in huge great chunks. Luckily it didn't work on me. Time Lord biology rather confused it, I think.

NESTA: What are you all talking about? This is right over my head.

DOCTOR: And I'll tell you something else, Mel. When I got inside the Vanity Box, it spoke to me. And I knew who it was.

COIFFURE: Is it dead? Have you killed it?

DOCTOR: Give me that back. It's far too dangerous to stay here.

MEL: He says he found it floating down the Ship Canal.

DOCTOR: Yeah. Come on, back to the Tardis. I don't know how it got into the Canal, but it doesn't belong here in this time and place. It's from another dimension. It would do untold damage if it was allowed to remain here.

(Door closes.)

COIFFURE: No! Bring it back! It promised me the world would be at my feet!

NESTA: Get up, you great jessie. You'll just have to get by without it, won't you. I never held with titivation in t'first place. I knew it were unnatural.

DOCTOR: We have to despatch it, send it somewhere far away. Somewhere no one will ever go.

MEL: Are you sure you're okay, Doctor? You went through an horrific ordeal with that thing on your head.

DOCTOR: I'm perfectly fine, Mel. I know what I'm doing. Now, we're ready.

MEL: Now?

DOCTOR: I'm going to make a little tear in the very fabric of Time and Space, so to speak.

(Whumph whoosh.)

MEL: That's amazing, Doctor. It really is a rip in the air, hanging open. But where's it going?

DOCTOR: Our little friend here is going to find out when I push him through.

VANITY BOX: Don't do this, I beg you. Don't throw me out there. Don't!

DOCTOR: It's time to go. I've no choice. Off you pop.

(Fading sound of the Vanity Box / Wishing Beast's cry, then the whooshing stops.)

DOCTOR: All right?

MEL: I think so.

DOCTOR: Look, we can track it through the Vortex on the scanner.

MEL: Is that it?

DOCTOR: Eh heh. It should come out somewhere very remote. Somewhere...

MEL: Like that?

DOCTOR: Mmm, yes. It's following our recent flightpath through Time and Space.

MEL: Back there, that asteroid in the distant past?

DOCTOR: That's right.

MEL: Couldn't you send it back where it came from?

DOCTOR: I touched its mind. I don't know where it came from. It's a very ancient powerful entity from somewhere... beyond. It would have wreaked havoc on Earth.

MEL: Mmm. I see that. But I also saw where you sent it.

DOCTOR: An asteroid, a long time ago. So long ago it forgot all about me.

MEL: It was the Wishing Beast, wasn't it?

DOCTOR: Yes, Mel. That's precisely who it was.

MEL: And it'll wait there, on that benighted rock, waiting for a certain spaceship to land, waiting for Daniel and his sisters to arrive and bring it back to life.

DOCTOR: Will it?

MEL: You could have *stopped* it. You could have prevented all of that suffering.

DOCTOR: Could I? No, I don't think so. That's like thinking you can roll back the years, like you can suddenly get young again overnight. It's all wishful thinking, Mel.

MEL: And what's so wrong with that?

DOCTOR: Nothing. It's just very human. But you've got to start seeing the bigger picture.

MEL: Look, they've kept seats for us.

DOCTOR: Good evening, ladies.

NESTA: Mine's a milk stout, since it's your shout, Doctor.

WINNIE: Eee, Nesta, it's a long time since you've welcomed strangers in the snug.

NESTA: Well, there you go, Winnie. I've had my horizons broadened this week.

WINNIE: Have you now?

NESTA: I've seen things you'd never have guessed at.

WINNIE: Ooo, I'm sorry to have missed 'em. Here, that Southern fella's not getting served. I'll get them in this time.



NESTA: You do that, Winnie. They could do with a reward, them two.

WINNIE: I'll get these.

MEL: Oh, thank you.

DOCTOR: What a pleasant evening. It's not often Mel and I pop into the pub. We don't have a local, do we?

NESTA: Where is it exactly that you two come from, any road?

WINNIE: Ey up, what's going on now?

NESTA: Bessy Tiplington's just come in, with Lily from corner shop.

DOCTOR: What's all the fuss about?

WINNIE: Ooo, look. They've gone back to normal.

MEL: The make-over's worn off.

NESTA: Eee, what a shame. They'll be so embarrassed, the way they were flaunting themselves round the shop. Oh, they look older than ever now, the pair of them.

DOCTOR: You can't escape Time.

NESTA: That you can't, Doctor. That you can't.

MEL: What was that, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Oh, nothing, Mel. Just more wishful thinking. Ask Winnie to get more pork scratchings as well, would you? Tell me, Mel. If the Wishing Beast had been real.

MEL: Yes?

DOCTOR: What would you have wished for, hmm?

MEL: Well...

DOCTOR: Mmm?

MEL: I was going to wish that things could go on just as they are.

DOCTOR: Ah.

MEL: For as long as we could manage. I love all this. Our lives, racketing about the galaxy.

DOCTOR: You'd have wished for more time.

MEL: Yes, I would.